

them, but as an example, you may know the name Marcus Luttrell. He was a Petty Officer First Class born in Huntsville, Texas, a former Navy SEAL, awarded the Navy Cross and wrote the New York Times best-selling book "Lone Survivor." The book details his remarkable story of surviving one of the war's deadliest battles for U.S. Special Forces. I had the honor of meeting him last week, and he's a remarkable individual.

TED mentioned Monica Lin Brown, the 19-year-old medic from Texas who became the first woman in Afghanistan and only the second woman since World War II to receive the Silver Star, the Nation's third highest medal for valor. Army Specialist Monica Lin Brown saved the lives of fellow soldiers after a roadside bomb tore through a convoy of Humvees last spring in Afghanistan. After the explosion which wounded five soldiers in her unit, Brown ran through insurgent gunfire and used her body to shield wounded comrades as mortars fell less than 100 yards away.

While today I have only mentioned Iraq and Afghanistan, I could go on for hours, as TED POE did, highlighting noticeable Texans who have gone above and beyond their service to this great Nation.

I want to thank Mr. POE and Humble, Texas, for recognizing those men and women who proudly wear the uniform for the United States of America. They help keep America the land of the free and the home of the brave. I salute all of our veterans.

God bless you and may God continue to bless our great Nation. I salute all of you in this Chamber for your support for our veterans.

Mr. DAVIS of Illinois. Mr. Speaker, I continue to reserve.

Ms. JACKSON-LEE of Texas. Mr. Speaker, I rise today in support of H.R. 5517, to designate the facility of the United States Postal Service located at 7231 FM 1960 in Humble, Texas, as the "Texas Military Veterans Post Office." I would like to thank my colleague, Mr. POE, for introducing this important bill, and Chairman WAXMAN of the Oversight and Government Reform Committee for bringing this legislation to the floor today. I strongly support honoring veterans of our armed forces, and I am proud to join my colleagues in the Texas delegation as an original cosponsor of this legislation. I hope my colleagues will join me in designating this facility as the Texas Military Veteran Post Office as a token of our appreciation.

The American men and women who serve in our armed forces are one of our Nation's most precious resources. Their service to this Nation could never be repaid, but we can ensure that our veterans who have faithfully served our country receive the recognition they are due and the services they need. Passing this resolution will send a strong message to our veterans that we appreciate their service. Our Nation has a proud legacy of appreciation and commitment to the men and women who have worn the uniform in defense of this country. We must show every soldier, sailor, airman, and marine that we honor and continue to respect their service to our Nation.

Currently, there are 25 million veterans in the United States. There are more than 1,633,000 veterans living in Texas and more than 32,000 veterans living in my Congressional district alone. I firmly believe that we should celebrate our veterans after every conflict, and I remain committed, as a Member of Congress, to both meeting the needs of veterans of previous wars, and to provide a fitting welcome home to those who are now serving in Iraq and Afghanistan. Veterans have kept their promise to serve our Nation; they have willingly risked their lives to protect the country we all love. We must now ensure that we keep our promises to our veterans.

Because I feel it is time that we recognize the success of our Nation's armed forces, I have introduced H.R. 4020, the "Military Success in Iraq Commemoration Act of 2007." This legislation recognizes the extraordinary performance of the Armed Forces in achieving the military objectives of the United States in Iraq as expressed by the Congressional mandate allowing for use of force, encourages the President to issue a proclamation calling upon the people of the United States to observe a national day of celebration commemorating the military success of American troops in Iraq.

Most importantly, my legislation provides affirmative and tangible expressions of appreciation from a grateful nation to all veterans of the war in Iraq. It authorizes the Secretary of Defense to award grants to State and local governments "to conduct suitable activities commemorating military success in Iraq" and "to create appropriate memorials honoring those who lost their lives securing military success in Iraq." My legislation sets up grants for veterans of Operation Iraqi Freedom, stating "the Secretary of Veterans Affairs shall award to each veteran of Operation Iraqi Freedom a grant in the amount of \$5,000. The purpose of that grant is to facilitate the veteran's transition to civilian life." I am pleased that thirteen of my colleagues have already signed onto this important legislation.

Renaming this post office facility to honor our veterans is a small but important step toward giving veterans the full accolades that they deserve. At various points in our Nation's history, we have sent our sons and daughters overseas to fight in defense of the great values and principles our Nation was founded upon. At times when the need is greatest, America's soldiers have always stepped up to protect our Nation. Let us show them our gratitude by presenting them with a postal facility that stands as a symbol of their dedication and sacrifice. Let us never forget that one of the things that makes our Nation truly great are the young men and women who have fought to defend it and our way of life.

I firmly believe that we must commend the men and women of our military for their exemplary performance and success. When World War II finally came to an end in 1945, celebrations erupted on the streets of cities and towns across our Nation. One of the most enduring images of that war is not a picture of bombs or destruction, but of a jubilant soldier kissing a woman in New York City's Times Square. The veterans we continue to honor as the "Greatest Generation" returned home not only to open arms, but also to the G.I. Bill, which offered them college or vocational education, as well as one year of unemployment compensation. It also provided loans for re-

turning veterans to buy homes and start businesses.

This Congress has begun to show our appreciation through legislation. We have already enacted significant increases in veterans' health care funding—increasing it by \$5.2 billion. The increase will go for veterans' health programs, including mental health care for returning veterans, especially for Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD).

In the words of President John F. Kennedy, "As we express our gratitude, we must never forget that the highest appreciation is not to utter words, but to live by them." It is not simply enough to sing the praises of our Nation's great veterans; I firmly believe that we must demonstrate by our actions how proud we are of our American heroes. I strongly urge my colleagues to join me in supporting H.R. 5517, to designate the facility of the United States Postal Service located at 7231 FM 1960 in Humble, Texas, as the "Texas Military Veteran Post Office."

Ms. FOXX. Mr. Speaker, I believe we have no more speakers, and we yield back the balance of our time.

Mr. DAVIS of Illinois. Mr. Speaker, I yield back the balance of our time.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The question is on the motion offered by the gentleman from Illinois (Mr. DAVIS) that the House suspend the rules and pass the bill, H.R. 5517.

The question was taken.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. In the opinion of the Chair, two-thirds being in the affirmative, the ayes have it.

Mr. DAVIS of Illinois. Mr. Speaker, on that I demand the yeas and nays.

The yeas and nays were ordered.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to clause 8 of rule XX and the Chair's prior announcement, further proceedings on this motion will be postponed.

CONTRACTING AND TAX ACCOUNTABILITY ACT OF 2008

Mr. BRALEY of Iowa. Mr. Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and pass the bill (H.R. 4881) to prohibit the awarding of a contract or grant in excess of the simplified acquisition threshold unless the prospective contractor or grantee certifies in writing to the agency awarding the contract or grant that the contractor or grantee has no seriously delinquent tax debts, and for other purposes, as amended.

The Clerk read the title of the bill.

The text of the bill is as follows:

H.R. 4881

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,

SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.

This Act may be cited as the "Contracting and Tax Accountability Act of 2008".

SEC. 2. GOVERNMENTAL POLICY.

It is the policy of the United States Government that no Government contracts or grants should be awarded to individuals or companies with seriously delinquent Federal tax debts.

SEC. 3. PROHIBITION ON AWARDING OF CONTRACTS TO DELINQUENT FEDERAL DEBTORS.

Section 3720B of title 31, United States Code, is amended—

(1) in the section heading, by adding at the end **"OR CONTRACTS"**;

(2) by adding at the end the following:

"(c)(1) Unless this subsection is waived by the head of a Federal agency, a person who has a seriously delinquent tax debt shall be proposed for debarment from any contract awarded by the Federal Government.

"(2) The head of any Federal agency that issues an invitation for bids or a request for proposals for a contract in an amount greater than the simplified acquisition threshold (as defined in section 4(11) of the Office of Federal Procurement Policy Act (41 U.S.C. 401(11))) shall require each person that submits a bid or proposal to submit with the bid or proposal a form—

"(A) certifying that the person does not have a seriously delinquent tax debt; and

"(B) authorizing the Secretary of the Treasury to disclose to the head of the agency information limited to describing whether the person has a seriously delinquent tax debt.

"(3) The Secretary shall make available to all Federal agencies a standard form for the certification and authorization described in paragraph (2).

"(4) Not later than 270 days after the date of enactment of this subsection, the Federal Acquisition Regulation shall be revised to incorporate the requirements of this subsection.

"(5) For purposes of this subsection:

"(A) The term 'contract' means a binding agreement entered into by a Federal agency for the purpose of obtaining property or services, but does not include—

"(i) a contract designated by the head of the agency as assisting the agency in the performance of disaster relief authorities; or

"(ii) a contract designated by the head of the agency as necessary to the national security of the United States.

"(B)(i) The term 'person' includes—

"(I) an individual;

"(II) a partnership; and

"(III) a corporation.

"(A) A partnership shall be treated as a person with a seriously delinquent tax debt if such partnership has a partner who—

"(I) holds an ownership interest of 50 percent or more in that partnership; and

"(II) who has a seriously delinquent tax debt.

"(iii) A corporation shall be treated as a person with a seriously delinquent tax debt if such corporation has an officer or a shareholder who—

"(I) holds 50 percent or more, or a controlling interest that is less than 50 percent, of the outstanding shares of corporate stock in that corporation; and

"(II) who has a seriously delinquent tax debt.

"(C)(i) The term 'seriously delinquent tax debt' means an outstanding debt under the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 for which a notice of lien has been filed in public records pursuant to section 6323 of such Code.

"(ii) Such term does not include—

"(I) a debt that is being paid in a timely manner pursuant to an agreement under section 6159 or section 7122 of such Code; and

"(II) a debt with respect to which a collection due process hearing under section 6330 of such Code, or relief under subsections (a), (b), or (f) of section 6015 of such Code, is requested or pending."

SEC. 4. PROHIBITION ON AWARDING OF GRANTS TO DELINQUENT FEDERAL DEBTORS.

(a) *IN GENERAL.*—The head of any Executive agency that offers a grant in excess of an amount equal to the simplified acquisition threshold (as defined in section 4(11) of the Office of Federal Procurement Policy Act (41 U.S.C. 401(11))) may not award such grant to any person unless such person submits with the application for such grant a form—

(1) certifying that the person does not have a seriously delinquent tax debt; and

(2) authorizing the Secretary of the Treasury to disclose to the head of the Executive agency

information limited to describing whether the person has a seriously delinquent tax debt.

(b) *RELEASE OF INFORMATION.*—The Secretary shall make available to all Executive agencies a standard form for the certification and authorization described in subsection (a)(2).

(c) *REVISION OF REGULATIONS.*—Not later than 270 days after the date of the enactment of this section, the Director of the Office of Management and Budget shall revise such regulations as necessary to incorporate the requirements of this section.

(d) *DEFINITIONS AND SPECIAL RULES.*—For purposes of this section:

(1) *PERSON.*—

(A) *IN GENERAL.*—The term "person" includes—

(i) an individual;

(ii) a partnership; and

(iii) a corporation.

(B) *TREATMENT OF CERTAIN PARTNERSHIPS.*—A partnership shall be treated as a person with a seriously delinquent tax debt if such partnership has a partner who—

(i) holds an ownership interest of 50 percent or more in that partnership; and

(ii) who has a seriously delinquent tax debt.

(C) *TREATMENT OF CERTAIN CORPORATIONS.*—A corporation shall be treated as a person with a seriously delinquent tax debt if such corporation has an officer or a shareholder who—

(i) holds 50 percent or more, or a controlling interest that is less than 50 percent, of the outstanding shares of corporate stock in that corporation; and

(ii) who has a seriously delinquent tax debt.

(2) *EXECUTIVE AGENCY.*—The term "executive agency" has the meaning given such term in section 4 of the Office of Federal Procurement Policy Act (41 U.S.C. 403).

(3) *SERIOUSLY DELINQUENT TAX DEBT.*—

(A) *IN GENERAL.*—The term "seriously delinquent tax debt" means an outstanding debt under the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 for which a notice of lien has been filed in public records pursuant to section 6323 of such Code.

(B) *EXCEPTIONS.*—Such term does not include—

(i) a debt that is being paid in a timely manner pursuant to an agreement under section 6159 or section 7122 of such Code; and

(ii) a debt with respect to which a collection due process hearing under section 6330 of such Code, or relief under subsections (a), (b), or (f) of section 6015 of such Code, is requested or pending.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the rule, the gentleman from Iowa (Mr. BRALEY) and the gentlewoman from North Carolina (Ms. FOXX) each will control 20 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Iowa.

GENERAL LEAVE

Mr. BRALEY of Iowa. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members have 5 legislative days in which to revise and extend their remarks.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is there objection to the request of the gentleman from Iowa?

There was no objection.

Mr. BRALEY of Iowa. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

H.R. 4881, the Contracting and Tax Accountability Act of 2008, is a very simple bill and a very timely bill. It prevents companies that don't pay their taxes from receiving contracts with the Federal Government. Today, people across the country are finishing up their tax returns to submit to the IRS by tomorrow. Nobody likes to pay

taxes, but the vast majority of American families and companies obey the law and comply with their responsibilities as citizens and taxpayers.

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Unfortunately, some people do not follow the law and have serious delinquencies in paying taxes to the IRS.

What is shocking to me and honest taxpayers across the country is that many companies that didn't pay their taxes were benefitting from Federal Government contracts. GAO studies over the past few years have identified more than 50,000 contractors owing nearly \$8 billion in unpaid Federal taxes. This bill will put an end to that problem once and for all.

Mr. Speaker, H.R. 4881 establishes a process to prohibit companies with seriously delinquent Federal tax debt from receiving new Federal contracts and grants. It will reward responsible taxpaying contractors with more opportunities to continue serving the Federal Government for abiding by the law. And it should increase collections because companies will get current on their tax bills if they want to continue receiving Federal contracts. With a mounting Federal budget deficit and rising obligations, the Federal Government cannot afford to leave billions of dollars in tax revenue uncollected.

The sponsor of H.R. 4881, Mr. ELLSWORTH from Indiana, has put in a lot of work on this bill, and I want to thank him for his efforts. As a former sheriff, he wants to make sure people who break the law are not rewarded.

When we get into contracting and tax law, the law gets complicated. He has worked hard to make sure this law will not have unintended consequences. We also received guidance from our colleagues on the Ways and Means and Joint Tax Committees. I would like to thank my friend from New York (Mr. RANGEL) and his staff for their assistance.

Chairman WAXMAN and Chairman RANGEL exchanged letters regarding committee jurisdiction on this bill, and I ask that these letters be placed in the RECORD.

Mr. Speaker, this bill is of monumental importance to improving fairness and efficiency in Federal contracting. I fully support its passage and urge my colleagues to do the same.

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES,
COMMITTEE ON WAYS AND MEANS,
Washington, DC, March 12, 2008.

Hon. HENRY WAXMAN,
Chairman, Oversight and Government Reform
Committee, Rayburn House Office Building,
Washington, DC.

DEAR HENRY, I am writing regarding H.R. 4881, the Contracting and Tax Accountability Act of 2008, which the Oversight and Government Reform Committee ordered favorably reported on March 13, 2008. As you know, a similar bill, H.R. 1870, was referred to the Oversight and Government Reform Committee, as well as to the Committee on Ways and Means.

Section 3 of H.R. 4881 authorizes the Secretary of the Treasury to disclose to other agencies whether or not a potential Federal

contractor has a seriously delinquent tax debt as defined by the bill, and requires the Secretary to develop and issue a form for this purpose. As you know, Rule X gives the Committee on Ways and Means jurisdiction over subjects relating to the U.S. Treasury and tax information being disclosed to other agencies generally, and we have successfully asserted jurisdiction over similar legislation.

Because our staffs have worked together to produce this bipartisan legislation, and in order to expedite this legislation for Floor consideration, the Committee will forgo action on this bill, and will not oppose the inclusion of these provisions within H.R. 4881. This is being done with the understanding that it does not in any way prejudice the Committee with respect to its jurisdictional prerogatives on this bill or similar legislation in the future.

I would appreciate your response to this letter, confirming this understanding with respect to H.R. 4881, and would ask that a copy of our exchange of letters on this matter be included in the record.

Sincerely,

CHARLES B. RANGEL,
Chairman.

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES, COMMITTEE ON OVERSIGHT AND GOVERNMENT REFORM,

Washington, DC, April 11, 2008.

Hon. CHARLES B. RANGEL,
*Chairman, Committee on Ways and Means,
Longworth House Office Building, Washington, DC.*

DEAR MR. CHAIRMAN: Thank you for your letter regarding H.R. 4881, the Contracting and Tax Accountability Act of 2008, which the Committee on Oversight and Government Reform reported, as amended, on April 10, 2008.

I appreciate your willingness to work cooperatively on this legislation and I recognize that the bill contains provisions that fall within the jurisdiction of the Committee on Ways and Means. I agree that your inaction with respect to this bill does not prejudice the Ways and Means Committee's interests and prerogatives regarding this bill or similar legislation.

I will ensure that our exchange of letters is included in the Congressional Record during consideration on the House floor of H.R. 4881.

Sincerely,

HENRY A. WAXMAN,
Chairman.

Mr. Speaker, I reserve the balance of my time.

Ms. FOXX. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Mr. Speaker, I rise today in support of H.R. 4881, the Contracting and Tax Accountability Act of 2008.

This legislation would subject any firm that has a seriously delinquent tax debt, defined to mean any time the IRS has filed a tax lien against the company, to a debarment proceeding with the aim of preventing the firm from obtaining a government contract or grant.

Potential contractors and grant recipients must certify that the company does not have any seriously delinquent tax debt in order to be eligible for Federal grants and contracts.

This might sound like a reasonable requirement, and it is. In fact, the administration is currently finalizing a regulation that would require Federal contractors and grantees to certify, among other things, that they have not

been notified by the IRS of liability for delinquent taxes. The proposed regulation would also include the failure to pay taxes as a specific cause for a company to be debarred from receiving Federal contracts. Since the issue addressed in this legislation is already being addressed through the regulatory process, it is unclear to us whether this legislation is necessary. Nevertheless, we will not object to it.

Mr. Speaker, I yield back the balance of my time.

Mr. BRALEY of Iowa. Mr. Speaker, at this time, I yield 5 minutes to the gentleman from Indiana, the sponsor of this bill, Mr. ELLSWORTH.

Mr. ELLSWORTH. I would like to thank the gentleman.

Mr. Speaker, I rise today in strong support of the Contracting and Tax Accountability Act of 2008.

Tomorrow is April 15, Tax Day, a day when Americans follow through on their civic obligation by filing their tax returns with the Federal Government. Paying taxes isn't something any of us enjoy doing, but we all do it anyway out of a sense of duty to our country.

Each year, taxpayers play by the rules and pay their share of taxes. I don't think it's too much to ask companies, particularly those who receive Federal Government contracts, to do the very same.

According to the Government Accountability Office report, in 2004 and 2005 alone, government contractors owed the U.S. Treasury over \$5 billion, that's billion with a "b," in unpaid Federal taxes. Many of these contractors were closely held businesses that simply gamed the system by withholding employee wages, Social Security, Medicare and individual income taxes and then never sending these withholdings to the IRS.

That doesn't mean that all contractors are cheating the system; in fact, most are not. Most are doing terrific work and putting our tax dollars to good use. But we have a responsibility to protect companies and taxpayer dollars by stopping corrupt contractors from gaming our system. The only way you do that, when they won't do it on their own, is by increased oversight.

This legislation is simple in scope and will go a long way towards ensuring that companies doing business with the Federal Government are doing that in good faith. And by leveling the playing field between contractors, we can better ensure our tax dollars are not used to reward tax cheats.

The Contracting and Tax Accountability Act establishes a process to prevent people who have serious tax delinquent debts from ever receiving Federal contracts or grants. This legislation affirms that it is the policy of the United States that no government contracts or grants should be awarded to individuals or companies with seriously delinquent Federal tax debts. It requires that bids for Federal contracts include a certification that the person

does not possess serious delinquent tax debt. An authorization to verify this certification with the Secretary of the Treasury is also required.

The definition of serious delinquent tax debt was carefully defined as an outstanding debt for which a Notice of Lien has been filed in the public record. The definition also excludes tax debt that is being repaid in accordance with an installment agreement, and a tax debt for which a collection due process has been requested.

I would like to thank Chairman WAXMAN, Chairman ED TOWNS for guiding this legislation through his subcommittee, and Mike McCarthy on his staff for lending his expertise. I would also like to thank Senator BARACK OBAMA and Ian Solomon on his staff for their collaboration in the Senate on this important legislation.

Mr. Speaker, the Contracting and Tax Accountability Act is a practical and cost-effective way to ensure all companies who wish to do business with the Federal Government compete on an equal playing field. This legislation protects good faith contractors who are playing by the rules and brings much needed transparency to how our tax dollars are being spent.

I urge my colleagues to pass this bill.

Mr. BRALEY of Iowa. Mr. Speaker, at this time, I yield as much time as he may consume to the distinguished Chair of the Oversight and Government Reform Committee, the gentleman from California (Mr. WAXMAN).

Mr. WAXMAN. Mr. Speaker, H.R. 4881, introduced by Representative ELLSWORTH, is a very important bill. It's a simple one. It's a commonsense bill. It would prohibit the award of Federal contracts to companies that don't pay their Federal taxes. It accomplishes this by requiring contractors to certify they do not have a serious delinquent debt, and to authorize the Treasury Department to disclose such information to contracting agencies.

The Federal Government should not be granting Federal contracts to companies that won't pay their taxes. Companies that cheat on their taxes have an unfair competitive advantage when bidding for Federal contracts because their costs are lowered. This bill will level the playing field and restore fairness to the Federal procurement system.

Representative TOWNS, who is the chairman of the subcommittee, along with Mr. ELLSWORTH, have put a lot of time and effort into addressing these concerns and in crafting a very good bill, and I want to thank them for all their hard work.

The minority also raised some concerns about previous versions of this legislation, and I also want to thank Representative TOM DAVIS for working constructively with us to address those issues.

The end product before us today is solid legislation which should have bipartisan support, and which I hope will address this issue once and for all.

I thank Representative ELLSWORTH for his excellent recommendations in offering this bill and seeing it through to the point where we are now on the House floor. I hope this bill will soon become law.

I urge all my colleagues to vote for H.R. 4881.

Mr. BRALEY of Iowa. Mr. Speaker, I encourage all of my colleagues to vote in favor of this bill.

Mr. Speaker, I yield back the balance of my time.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The question is on the motion offered by the gentleman from Iowa (Mr. BRALEY) that the House suspend the rules and pass the bill, H.R. 4881, as amended.

The question was taken; and (two-thirds being in the affirmative) the rules were suspended and the bill, as amended, was passed.

A motion to reconsider was laid on the table.

PLAIN LANGUAGE IN GOVERNMENT COMMUNICATIONS ACT OF 2008

Mr. BRALEY of Iowa. Mr. Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and pass the bill (H.R. 3548) to enhance citizen access to Government information and services by establishing plain language as the standard style for Government documents issued to the public, and for other purposes, as amended.

The Clerk read the title of the bill.

The text of the bill is as follows:

H.R. 3548

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,

SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.

This Act may be cited as the "Plain Language in Government Communications Act of 2008".

SEC. 2. PURPOSE.

The purpose of this Act is to improve the Federal Government's effectiveness and accountability to the public by promoting clear communication that the public can understand and use.

SEC. 3. DEFINITIONS.

In this Act:

(1) AGENCY.—The term "agency" means an Executive agency, as that term is defined in section 105 of title 5, United States Code.

(2) PLAIN LANGUAGE.—The term "plain language" means language that the intended audience can readily understand and use because it is clear, concise, well-organized, and follows other best practices of plain language writing.

SEC. 4. RESPONSIBILITIES OF FEDERAL AGENCIES.

(a) REQUIREMENT TO USE PLAIN LANGUAGE IN NEW DOCUMENTS.—Within one year after the date of the enactment of this Act, each agency—

(1) shall use plain language in any covered document of the agency issued or substantially revised after the date of the enactment of this Act;

(2) may use plain language in any revision of a covered document issued on or before such date; and

(3) shall, when appropriate, use the English language in covered documents.

(b) GUIDANCE.—In implementing subsection (a), an agency may follow either the guid-

ance of the Plain English Handbook, published by the Securities and Exchange Commission, or the Federal Plain Language Guidelines. If any agency has its own plain language guidance, the agency may use that guidance, as long as it is consistent with the Federal Plain Language Guidelines, the Plain English Handbook, published by the Securities and Exchange Commission, and the recommendations made by the Comptroller General under section 5(c).

(c) ADDITIONAL PROVISIONS RELATING TO USE OF ENGLISH LANGUAGE.—Nothing in this Act shall be construed—

(1) to prohibit the use of a language other than English;

(2) to limit the preservation or use of Native Alaskan or Native American languages (as defined in the Native American Languages Act);

(3) to disparage any language or discourage any person from learning or using a language;

(4) to impact or affect protections regarding language access; or

(5) to be inconsistent with the Constitution of the United States.

(d) COVERED DOCUMENT.—In this section, the term "covered document"—

(1) means any document that explains how to obtain a benefit or service or file taxes, or that is relevant to obtaining a benefit or service or filing taxes; and

(2) includes, whether in paper or electronic form, a letter, publication, form, notice, or instruction but does not include a regulation.

(e) USE OF PLAIN LANGUAGE BY AGENCIES.—Each agency should, to the extent practicable and appropriate, use plain language in any collection of information (as defined in section 3502(3)(A)(i) of title 44, United States Code).

(f) INCORPORATION OF COMPTROLLER GENERAL RECOMMENDATIONS.—

(1) REPORTS.—

(A) FEDERAL AVIATION ADMINISTRATION.—The Administrator of the Federal Aviation Administration, acting through the Plain Language Action and Information Network, shall submit to the committees described in paragraph (2) a report on whether the recommendations made by the Comptroller General in the report under section 5(c) have been incorporated into the Federal Plain Language Guidelines described in subsection (b), and, if such recommendations have not been incorporated, an explanation of why they have not been incorporated.

(B) SECURITIES AND EXCHANGE COMMISSION.—The Securities and Exchange Commission shall submit to the committees described in paragraph (2) a report on whether the recommendations made by the Comptroller General in the report under section 5(c) have been incorporated into the Plain English Handbook described in subsection (b), and, if such recommendations have not been incorporated, an explanation of why they have not been incorporated.

(2) COMMITTEES.—The committees described in this paragraph are the Committee on Oversight and Government Reform of the House of Representatives and the Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs of the Senate.

(3) DEADLINE.—The reports required under paragraph (1) shall be submitted within six months after the issuance of the report provided by the Comptroller General under section 5(c).

SEC. 5. REPORTS TO CONGRESS.

(a) INITIAL REPORT.—Within six months after the date of the enactment of this Act, the head of each agency shall submit to the Committee on Oversight and Government Reform of the House of Representatives and

the Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs of the Senate a report that describes how the agency intends to meet the following objectives:

(1) Communicating the requirements of this Act to agency employees.

(2) Training agency employees to write in plain language.

(3) Meeting the deadline set forth in section 4(a).

(4) Ensuring ongoing compliance with the requirements of this Act.

(5) Designating a senior official to be responsible for implementing the requirements of this Act.

(6) Using, to the extent practicable and appropriate, plain language in regulations promulgated by the agency.

(b) ANNUAL AND OTHER REPORTS.—

(1) The head of each agency shall submit to the Committee on Oversight and Government Reform of the House of Representatives and the Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs of the Senate a report on—

(A) compliance with this Act; and

(B) the agency's continued efforts to meet the objectives specified in subsection (a).

(2) A report under this subsection shall be submitted—

(A) annually for the first two years after the date of the enactment of this Act; and

(B) once every three years thereafter.

(c) EVALUATION AND REPORT BY COMPTROLLER GENERAL.—Within six months after the date of the enactment of this Act, the Comptroller General shall evaluate existing guidance for agencies on writing in plain language, including the guidance listed in section 4(b), and provide to the Office of Management and Budget, the Committee on Oversight and Government Reform of the House of Representatives, and the Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs of the Senate a report providing recommendations on—

(1) plain language guidelines; and

(2) best practices for plain language.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the rule, the gentleman from Iowa (Mr. BRALEY) and the gentleman from North Carolina (Ms. FOXX) each will control 20 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Iowa.

GENERAL LEAVE

Mr. BRALEY of Iowa. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members may have 5 legislative days in which to revise and extend their remarks.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is there objection to the request of the gentleman from Iowa?

There was no objection.

Mr. BRALEY of Iowa. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Mr. Speaker, last September, I introduced H.R. 3548, the Plain Language in Government Communications Act, and I rise today to talk about the responsibility of this government to communicate effectively with its constituents.

I know that lawyers are often blamed for the legalese that makes government documents so difficult to read and understand. Some might find it unusual that this "Plain Language" bill was introduced by someone who practiced law for 23 years before being elected to Congress. They might be surprised to learn that the use of clear,